

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:  
a flexible cover having a general tubular configuration for covering at  
least a portion of an elongated medical instrument;

5 an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible  
cover, the insertion element being selectively expandable from a closed  
position to an open position to facilitate insertion of the elongated medical  
instrument;

10 a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion  
element and separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and  
one-half inches;

15 a pair of formed in the cover and aligned with the pair of substantially  
parallel perforations, the pair of substantially parallel score lines extending  
from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover and separated by a  
distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches; and

20 a tab coupled to the insertion element proximate the pair of  
substantially parallel perforations, whereby the tab is adapted to remove a  
portion of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel  
perforations and a portion of the flexible cover between the pair of  
substantially parallel score lines when a pulling force is applied to the tab.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end is closed.

25 3. The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes an aperture.

30 4. The system of Claim 1, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an  
aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the insertion element is coupled within  
the first end of the flexible cover.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

5 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

8. A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:  
a flexible cover configured to cover at least a portion of a medical  
instrument;

an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible  
cover;

a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion  
element; and

a pair of substantially parallel score lines formed in the cover and  
aligned with the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby a portion  
of the insertion element between the pair of substantially parallel perforations  
is removable from the insertion element and a portion of the flexible cover  
between the pair of substantially parallel score lines is removable from the  
flexible cover when a force is applied to the portion of the insertion element  
between the pair of substantially parallel perforations.

9. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a tab coupled to the  
insertion element proximate the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby  
the tab is adapted to remove the portion of the insertion element between the pair of  
substantially parallel perforations and the portion of the cover between the pair of  
substantially parallel score lines when a pulling force is applied to the tab.

10. The system of Claim 8, wherein the flexible cover is of a generally  
tubular configuration and is formed from a polymer.

11. The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end is closed.

12. The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes an aperture.

13. The system of Claim 8, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an  
aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

14. The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is formed from cardboard.

5 15. The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is selectively expandable from a closed position to an open position.

16. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a pair of gripping apertures formed in the insertion element.

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17. The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is coupled within the first end of the flexible cover.

18. The system of Claim 8, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the  
15 outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

19. The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the pair of substantially parallel score lines are each separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

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20. The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover.

21. The system of Claim 8, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score  
25 lines extend from the first end to an intermediate portion of the flexible cover.

22. The system of Claim 8, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

23. A method for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:

covering at least a portion of a medical instrument with a flexible cover, the flexible cover having an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible cover;

removing a portion of the insertion element disposed between a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion element by applying a force to the portion of the insertion element disposed between the pair of substantially parallel perforations; and

removing an elongated portion of the flexible cover disposed between a pair of substantially parallel score lines formed in the flexible cover and aligned with the pair of substantially parallel perforations in the insertion element by continuing to apply the force to the portion of the insertion element disposed between the pair of substantially parallel perforations.

24. The method of Claim 23, wherein the covering step comprises expanding the insertion element from a closed position to an open position, and inserting the portion of the medical instrument through the insertion element and into the flexible cover.

25. The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations and the pair of substantially parallel score lines are each separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

26. The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to a second end of the flexible cover.

27. The method of Claim 23, wherein the pair of substantially parallel score lines extend from the first end to an intermediate portion of the flexible cover.

28. The method of Claim 23, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.

29. A system for removing a cover from a medical instrument, comprising:  
a flexible cover configured to cover at least a portion of a medical  
instrument;

an insertion element coupled proximate a first end of the flexible  
cover;

a pair of substantially parallel perforations formed in the insertion  
element; and

whereby a portion of the insertion element between the pair of  
substantially parallel perforations is removable from the insertion element and  
a portion of the flexible cover is removable from the flexible cover when a  
force is applied to the portion of the insertion element between the pair of  
substantially parallel perforations.

30. The system of Claim 29, further comprising a tab coupled to the  
insertion element proximate the pair of substantially parallel perforations, whereby  
the tab is adapted to remove the portion of the insertion element between the pair of  
substantially parallel perforations and the portion of the cover when the force is  
applied to the tab.

31. The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end is closed.

32. The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes an aperture.

33. The system of Claim 29, wherein a second end of the flexible cover  
distal the first end includes a scored or perforated portion adapted to produce an  
aperture in the second end when a force is applied to the scored or perforated portion.

34. The system of Claim 29, wherein the insertion element is coupled  
within the first end of the flexible cover.

35. The system of Claim 29, wherein the insertion element is coupled on the outside of the first end of the flexible cover.

5 36. The system of Claim 29, wherein the pair of substantially parallel perforations are separated by a distance of approximately one-half inch to one and one-half inches.

10 37. The system of Claim 29, wherein the medical instrument is selected from the group consisting of an endoscope, an ultrasound probe, a gamma probe, and a video camera.